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COMPUTER SECURITY LEGISLATION

Upon return from recess, the House will consider H.R. 2889, the "Computer Security Act of 1986." This bill would vest within the National Bureau of Standards responsibility for developing security standards for computers, and conducting computer security management, research, and training. The bill exempts the Agency and DoD computers from NBS jurisdiction, and all other computers that store classified information. The bill is strongly opposed by NSA since it would remove their jurisdiction to establish computer security standards in other government agencies and the private sector.

The bill is controversial within the House, and failed to muster the necessary 2/3 majority when brought up under a Suspension of the Rules in early August. However, it is expected to prevail when considered again by the House under procedures requiring a simple majority. The HPSCI staff has been helpful in offering amendments to soften the impact of the bill on the Intelligence Community, but these amendments are not sufficient to alleviate the major concern of NSA, and it is doubtful that Chairman Hamilton or a majority of HPSCI can be persuaded to engage in an all out effort to kill the bill. No action has been taken in the Senate. The Administration has hinted that the President will veto the bill if it ever reaches his desk. However, it is possible the bill may be attached to some other legislation that the President will find to be veto-proof, i.e., Continuing Resolution.

NSA has requested that the Agency support its efforts to kill the legislation, but has not, as of yet, requested that the Agency take any specific action.